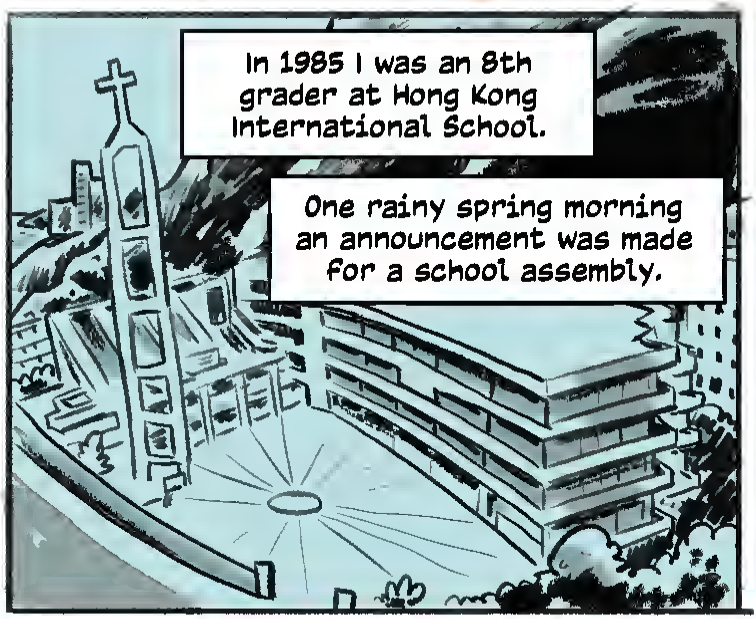
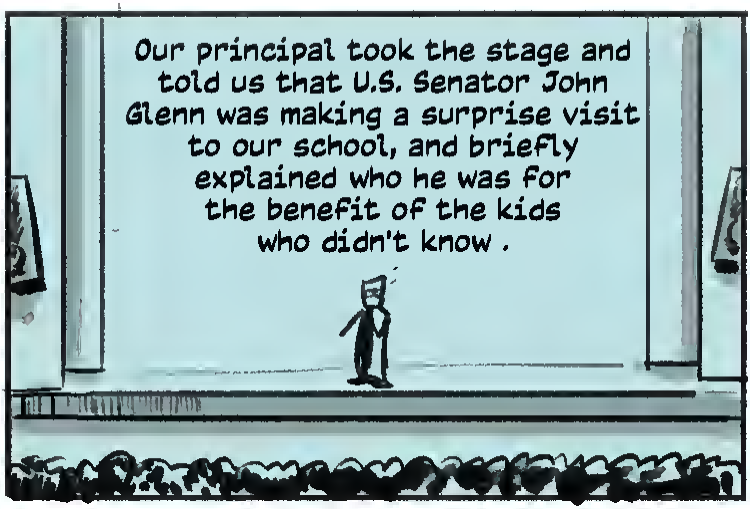
A POLIDIOCY SPECIAL PRESENTATION

THIS WEEK WE'RE FOREGOING OUR REGULAR UPDATE ON THE U.S. REALITY SHOW "*POLITICS: THE FINAL SEASON*" AND HAND OFF THE MIC TO POLIDIOCY ARTIST *RYAN DUNLAVEY* FOR A PERSONAL STORY ON ASTRONAUT, VETERAN, AND U.S SENATOR, *JOHN GLENN.*

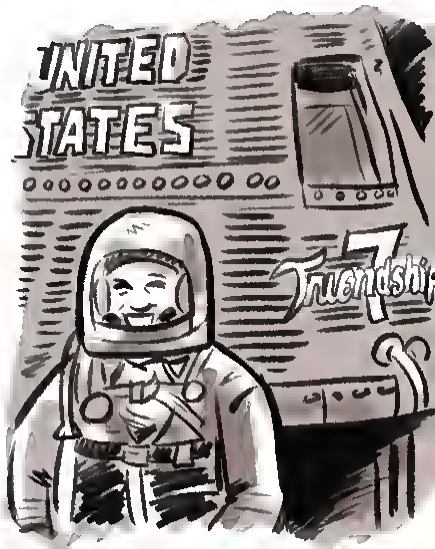

In 1985 I was an 8th grader at Hong Kong International School.
One rainy spring morning an announcement was made for a school assembly.

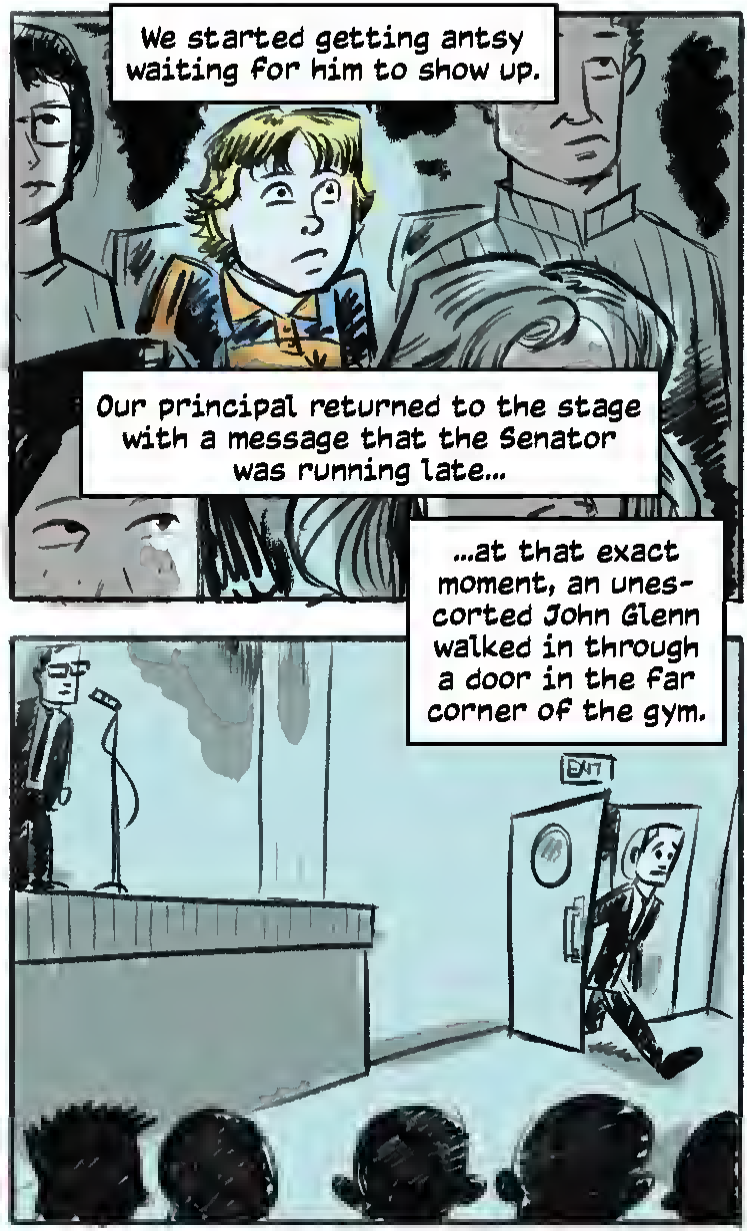
The entire school, Kindergarten through 12th grade -about 1000 people in all- crammed into the high school's gymnasium.
We had no idea why we were there.
GO DRAGONS!
HKIS

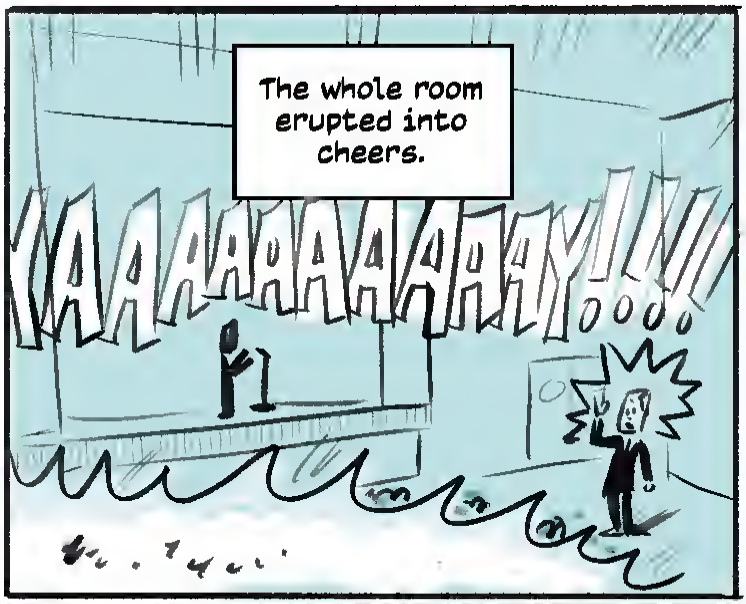

Our principal took the stage and told us that U.S. Senator John Glenn was making a surprise visit to our school, and briefly explained who he was for the benefit of the kids who didn't know .

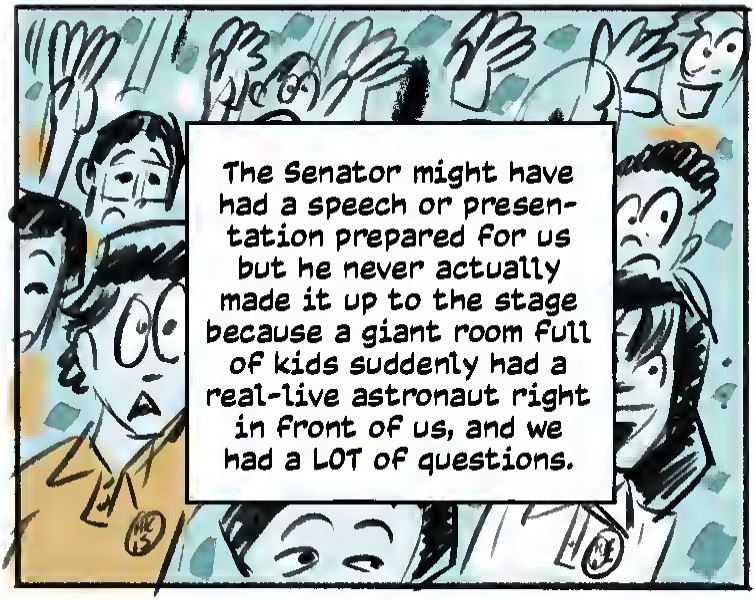
I've always been an avid fan of space exploration and had just recently seen *The Right Stuff* for the first time, so I knew EXACTLY who John Glenn was.

Decorated combat pilot, former test pilot, the first American to orbit the Earth and at that time, a U.S. Senator.




We started getting antsy waiting for him to show up.
Our principal returned to the stage with a message that the Senator was running late...
...at that exact moment, an unescorted John Glenn walked in through a door in the far corner of the gym.
EXIT


The whole room erupted into cheers.
YAAAAAAAAAAAAY!!!!


The Senator might have had a speech or presentation prepared for us but he never actually made it up to the stage because a giant room full of kids suddenly had a real-live astronaut right in front of us, and we had a LOT of questions.

Patiently & with good humor, John Glenn stood on his feet in the corner of a school gymnasium answering our questions about outer space for almost 2 hours.
He told us stories about being an astronaut and a test pilot.
He told us the history of NASA.

I got a chance to ask him what problems zero gravity caused, he said that it didn't personally cause him any problems since he was only in space for a few hours, but that other astronauts would often forget that things don't float back on Earth.

He told us how on one very early morning one of his colleagues absent mindedly let go of a can of shaving cream in mid-air instead of setting it back on his bathroom countertop. The resulting clatter woke up his wife, who was not happy.

Senator Glenn only spoke about himself and his accomplishments when asked directly, and he had only briefly gotten a chance to say why he was in Hong Kong (which I don't recall) before the questions started flying.

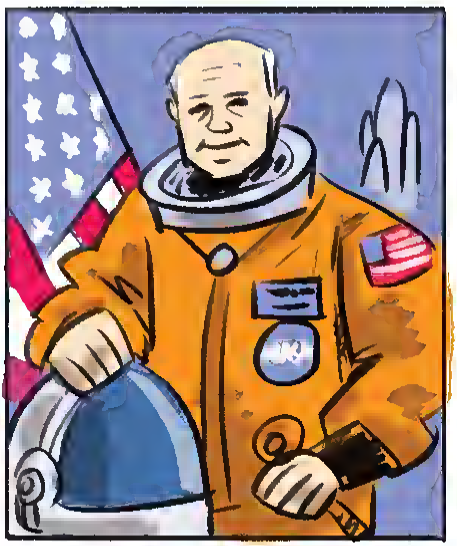
It clearly wasn't the plan for his visit, but that's what happened.

Finally things had gone on too long and he had to leave. He exited through the same doors he came in, only a few feet away from where he had been standing the entire time.

He never actually made it up to the stage.

For 2 hours on a rainy day in a school gymnasium full of eager young minds, thousands of miles away from his home country, John Glenn wasn't a pilot or a politician or even an astronaut.

He was our teacher.



I'll always carry the memory of John Glenn's kindness and patience of that day with me.

Rest in Peace, sir.

Ryan Dunlavey
December 2016